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TAGS: PGOV PINR CO

SUBJECT: LIBERAL VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IVAN MARULANDA

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR JEFFREY DELAURENTIS;
REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (U) This is the first in a series of cables on the seven vice presidential candidates for the upcoming presidential elections on May 28.

¶2. (C) Liberal Party presidential candidate Horacio Serpa announced March 28 that Ivan Marulanda Gomez would be his vice presidential running mate. Marulanda is an experienced legislator, but Serpa's choice has been criticized as more sentimental than strategic. Marulanda lacks name recognition and clout. A life-long member of the Liberal Party who was close to assassinated presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan, Marulanda will not be the vote draw the party needs if it is to challenge President Uribe on May 28. Serpa may be aware of the limitations of his choice; rumors hold that Serpa offered the vice presidency to many important Liberals, including labor leader Carlos Rodriguez Diaz, and Senator's Rafael Pardo, Rodrigo Rivera and Andres Gonzalez, all of whom declined. End Summary.

Experienced Legislator, Lacks Popular Support

¶3. (U) On March 28, Liberal presidential candidate Horacio Serpa announced former Senator Ivan Marulanda Gomez would be his vice presidential running mate. Marulanda is an experienced legislator whose career began in 1974 when he was elected mayor of Pereira at age 28. He was a Medellin city council member from 1984-1985. From 1986 to 1990, Marulanda served as Senator, alongside Serpa, but was not re-elected. In 1991, he was elected to the National Constituent Assembly, which drafted Colombia's current constitution.

¶4. (C) Despite his experience, Marulanda has suffered several electoral defeats. Most recently, he failed to win a Senate seat in the March 12 congressional elections, receiving only 3410 votes. (Note: He finished number 42 of the Liberal Party's Senate aspirants; only the first 17 attained seats. End note.) Given his poor showing, Marulanda lacks the clout to attract the votes Serpa needs to challenge Uribe, who has been running anywhere from 55-65 percent in recent polls compared to Serpa's 12-25 percent. As a consequence, Serpa's choice of running mate has been criticized as more sentimental than strategic. Marulanda has acknowledged that he is not a vote getter, telling the Cali daily *El Pais* that, while he doesn't have the votes, he has experience, ideas, character and perseverance.

¶5. (C) Rumors abound that Serpa's first choice for a running mate, Carlos Rodriguez Diaz, head of Colombia's

largest labor union, Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), declined Serpa's invitation. Serpa publicly denied offering the number two job to others, but Embassy contacts say he also offered the job to other high-profile Liberals, including Senators Rafael Pardo, Rodrigo Rivera and Andres Gonzalez, and even Antioquia Governor Anibal Gaviria.

Life-long Liberal

¶6. (U) Marulanda is a life-long Liberal known for his close relationship with assassinated presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan Sarmiento. Marulanda was a founding member of the "New Liberalism" movement, started by Galan in 1979 to revitalize and modernize the Liberal Party, which had been infiltrated by narcotraffickers, including Pablo Escobar. Galan and Marulanda rejoined the mainstream Liberal Party in 1987, two years before Galan was assassinated.

¶7. (U) Marulanda is close to Serpa after their joint tenure in the Senate. Like Serpa, he espouses traditional Liberal ideology and is interested in focusing more GOC effort on solving social problems. He has a particular interest in Colombia's 3.7 million displaced persons and the millions of Colombians who live below the poverty level.

¶8. (U) Since leaving office in 1990, Marulanda has focused on academic pursuits, but remained involved with the Liberal Party. He is a professor of economics at Antioquia University and has written several books, including "Testimony from the Edge of the Abyss" and "In My Own Hand," both recounting his experiences in public office. Marulanda is the founder and director of the Pereira newspaper La Tarde and makes regular appearances in the editorial pages of Colombia's leading newspapers. His themes consistently include issues like social welfare.

Critical of Uribe Administration, Peace Process

¶9. (U) Marulanda has criticized Uribe's failure to address social issues, including poverty, as well as the "concentration of power" in Colombia since being named Serpa's running mate. Marulanda has claimed that Uribe's efforts have only served to prolong Colombia's internal conflict and promises that a vote for the Liberal Party will be a vote to embark upon "a path of reason to end the war."

¶10. (U) Marulanda does not support the peace process with the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia. In an interview with Medellin daily El Colombiano April 5, he criticized the Justice and Peace Law, saying it would need to be reformed in order to serve as a framework for negotiations. He acknowledged the importance of reinsertion, but said demobilized paramilitaries were not entitled to "political" status and should only be eligible for benefits in the context of truth, punishment and reparations for victims.

Other Experience, Personal Information

¶11. (U) Marulanda served as Colombian Ambassador to the United Nations and has been a consultant to the Organization of American States on democracy in the Andean region. Ivan Marulanda was born June 4, 1964 in Pereira. He is one of ten children. He received a degree in economics from Antioquia University and also has a degree in statistics. Marulanda is married and has two children. He speaks English fluently.
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